



## **NEWS FROM NOAA**

**NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

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NOAA05-R918  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
June 17, 2005

### **NOAA AWARDS \$90,000 TO RESTORE FISHERY HABITAT IN FLORIDA** ***Grant Administered by the Florida Department Of Environmental Protection***

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration awarded \$90,000 to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) for a community-based project to restore fishery habitat in the Lignumvitae Key Submerged Land Management Area (LKMA) in the Florida Keys. The project is funded by the Community-based Restoration Program within the NOAA Fisheries Service Restoration Center with matching funds contributed by FDEP.

The FDEP will use the grant funds to implement a project to speed the rate of recovery for seagrass impacted by boating activity. Because of its abundant natural resources, LKMA is a popular boating and fishing destination for Florida Keys residents and visitors. Seagrass is a shallow water resource and boating activities cause damage to seagrass meadows. Boat propellers cause prop-scars and boat groundings result in blowout holes in the seagrass. It can take years for seagrass to recover especially in areas with multiple boating impacts.

"Seagrass is essential fish habitat, providing critical resources for the survival of many commercially and recreationally important species," said Dr. Roy Crabtree, regional administrator for the NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Region. "NOAA Fisheries Service is committed to protecting and restoring this valuable resource."

This project will restore two boat grounding sites and associated prop scars. FDEP will use techniques that have been successful at other injured areas in the Florida Keys, including filling large holes, transplanting seagrass shoots and installing bird stakes. Bird stakes provide a place for birds to roost and waste from the birds provides a higher concentration of nutrients that allow seagrass to grow more quickly

In order to prevent future seagrass impacts, FDEP will work with the FDEP Division of Law Enforcement and members of the Florida Keys Guides Association to distribute brochures on boat damage prevention. Visits to the two restoration sites will also be incorporated into the Florida Keys Outreach Partner's annual Seagrass Awareness Month.

"As important as seagrass restoration is, no level of effort will be successful without a wide ranging boater education program," said Pat Wells, park manager, Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park. "This need is acutely felt within the Florida Keys, where boating is year round and a large percentage of our boating public is transient and unfamiliar with the area."

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The NOAA Restoration Center Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) is a financial and technical assistance program that promotes strong partnerships at the national, regional, and local level to restore fisheries habitat. NOAA CRP works with organizations and government to support locally-driven habitat restoration projects in marine, estuarine, and riparian areas. NOAA CRP funds on-the-ground habitat restoration projects that (1) offer educational and social benefits for citizens and their communities, and (2) provide long-term ecological benefits for fishery resources. Since 1996, more than 900 projects in 26 states have been implemented using NOAA funding and leveraged funding from national and regional habitat restoration partners.

Each year, NOAA awards approximately \$900 million in grants to members of the academic, scientific and business communities to assist the agency in fulfilling its mission to study the Earth's natural systems in order to predict environmental change, manage ocean resources, protect life and property, and provide decision makers with reliable scientific information. NOAA goals and programs reflect a commitment to these basic responsibilities of science and service to the nation for the past 35 years.

NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

Community-based Restoration Program: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>